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## Sr. Evelyn Lindenmaier

Mary Ellen Lennon Ph.D.

Marian University - Indianapolis, [melennon@marian.edu](mailto:melennon@marian.edu)

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**August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 – Sister Evelyn Lindenmaier speaking with Professor Mary Ellen Lennon at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg, Indiana.**

Abbreviations

SEL: Sister Evelyn Lindenmaier

MEL: Mary Ellen Lennon

MEL: This is Mary Ellen Lennon in Oldenburg, Indiana, on August 1, 2016. I am so pleased to be sitting here with Sister Evelyn Lindenmaier. Thank you Sister. Would you introduce yourself?

SEL: I could say I am the last of the family because my sister does not own the last place alone. So she always says that she is number four, five minutes after the third. So that's where I rank in the family and I have two older brothers, wonderful brothers, wonderful parents and I got my vocation from my mom and my father and my aunt, Sister Leona, who was such a wonderful religious. That's where really I got my calling and at first I didn't know. Should I, should I, should I, should I? So I thought, well, I might as well give it a try to see if it's my real call in life, which I did. Not knowing that my sister also was contemplating. We never talked it over until it came out at a party for a friend who was going to the Sisters of Providence and my brother said, "Well when are you going?" And I said, "September the 8th." And she did too. So then we went to get our things together and we enter together, same class, and when it came to making profession, I would not tell her whether I was or wasn't because I did not want that to be an influence on each other.

When it came to final vows, I wouldn't tell her she didn't tell me. We met out in that grotto yard that we take care of. And I says, "Did you make yours for life or did you renew?" She says, "I made mine for life." She says, "What did you do?" And I said, "I made mine for life." And we just hugged each other and ran out to our parents to let them know that we made it for life because we could have renewed if we felt we needed to, but we didn't want to.

And that's how my religious life got started. Sixty-one years and I haven't regretted one thing. I'm not saying it doesn't have its ups and downs. It's like anybody else's life, but I learned so *many* things, things that I never thought I was going to do: Never dreamt of being a teacher and then realized as I was teaching that I was a very creative person. Not considering that as a talent and things would come automatic and I would do a lot of fixing and repairing of things. Sisters would call on intermission, Can you fix a light switch? Can you do this or can you do that? And I loved it. And I loved all—I still do. I love to do for people and so I picked up and realized all of my talents and I—cause I knew I wasn't a bookworm, so I was going to be a housekeeper.

So that all changed, which I am grateful for and I had offers when I was a young Sister to do copier machine repair and things like that and at that time we didn't do it. It was still when I was in the habit, back in, it was back in the early 60's. So I couldn't accept the offer and then I was also asked if I would work at a store that sell all these craft things that used to come in kits because I put together, my sister and I did. I did most of it because my sister doesn't have that kind of patience. A zebra with over a thousand some nails the string art and I strung it and it was beautiful when I get finished it was on a beautiful black background and I was so proud of it, so we took it home to show my mother. I never got it

back until they finally after I think fifty years it started to fall apart and those are the things I love to—I love to work with my hands and so when we got to retirement, we were called home to do these jobs that we had, which is I was working in the communication office and I did a lot of the running off of things and the distributing of things and getting mail out and things like that, while she was the head of the housekeeper's and I knew that's where her talent was and I knew that's where my talent was.

So we accepted the offer to come home, which was difficult because we had assignments that we were really happy at, but I took it as that was a vow of obedience, so I accepted it and we were about 68 years of age then and when we got to be 75 we both knew we wanted to kind of think of retiring. I didn't want it, no more responsibilities. So in the process, well, Sister Barb Pillar who was head of the community at a time, said, "What can I do for you?" I says, "Well it would be nice if I had a little craft shop someplace in the basement because over in the apartment building next to chapel, I got tired of carrying things up and down from the attic, then I tried to think I could make a workplace in the attic and we found out it was too cold or too hot. So she says, "Well, I think we can do that." So they found a little room where they used to store pop cans and they moved the pop cans out and gave us a little room and painted it up, fixed it up, really nice. And put in some plugs, not enough, but they put some in and asked if that was okay, which it was. But not realizing that you can't paint in the same room you saw. I said, "Do you think that room next door, this is not being used by too many at art anymore because Sister Leticia Meyer passed away and she was teaching people and so it's kind of just sitting empty. And she says, "No I think you could go ahead and take that out and get rid of anything as old needs to be ditched." So that then became my painting room because in the process we got a miter saw, a band saw, a scroll saw, a router, a table saw. And that all took space. And we got a planer, got that too.

And that's where we began to get into wood and we went to my cousin in Greensburg and he was good at craft work. Made beautiful things for his children and his grandchildren for wedding gifts and we said, you wouldn't happen to have any old scrap wood you're gonna throw away, would you? He says, Yeah I got plenty of wood. He says, I'll tell you what, we'll put it in a truck and we'll bring it to Oldenburg for you. So all this poplar wood, which is really nice wood to work with. He brought in all this poplar wood and even a dentist, his daughter, her husband is a cabinet maker and he gave us some of his old scraps of the cabinet wood and so off we started and we started. Then I got a book, a scrapbook for keeping because we said, When we die, put out the book and let everybody see what we made and forget about us. So we started with birdhouses and we made shelves. Tried to make some of them fancy. Took old things that people began to donate to us like these type of ladders and I remember making that into a clock and people bought it and use it as a wedding gift. So we start just with dumb stuff and so more and more was coming in of odds and ends that we were starting to put together and with the creativity, I would work on it. Rachel did the cutting, Rachel did the sanding, got everything prepared then it came over to me because I was the artistic painter.

And so that is what we're doing now for retirement and I give credit, a lot of credit, to my mother. My mother used to say she had four boys, no girls, because wherever dad went we went and I learned a lot of my woodworking through my dad and through my brothers. I learned my plumbing and everything and people would say, How do you know all this? Well I says, I learned a lot from my mom, my dad, my two brothers and watched DIY on television. That's a do-it-yourself program. Watch it and learn. You learn so much on that

program on how to make things. And so we, I think we made already approximately close to over five hundred dollars for the community of the things we made all the different items you almost need to see our picture album to really understand but it was just a little trinket things like the birdhouses out on campus, a bird feeder it is, and it's sitting right by the road and I fixed it so the Sisters in Saint Clare Hall would have something to entertain them and I took and put old lumber together and I had saved a couple of old license plates. So I used it for the roof and the one side "In God We Trust" and on the other side of the roof it says, Handicap. And that you can lift it up and put your food in there and I needed something underneath as a tray to hold the seed so I had an old pan you used like for cookies or stuff. And I screwed it up there and it's been out there ever since.

It's become a conversation piece. I said, I didn't know that thing would make that much entertainment for people and I've heard people walk by and say, That's clever. And so and my sister and I, this is a little bit backtracking, but when we were on mission we used to, we started a Super Bowl party. And so we would have, do things, those who didn't like it would go to the basement and where we were at Saint Al's and watch movies. The rest of us would be cheerleaders for the Super Bowl.

Well, eventually, when we got changed we couldn't hold it [the party], we started a Saint Nicholas party and that was when Rachel and I both made items for every Sister that came to the party, which is about twenty some and no one was allowed to open it until they opened it at the same time because everybody's was the same and they were really some clever ideas when I look back on them and then later on I'd say look, they made the same thing we did. So we don't know who got the idea for who, but I know we didn't get it from them and we did that for twenty years. And that was a good way of drawing community together when we were in Cincinnati and that's how, until—so to the day at the age of 80, I still do the wood shop. We call it the "ENR Hobby Shop" standing for "Evelyn And Rachel" and by relaxation is jigsaw puzzles, which I dearly love and Sister Truce Tackit?, she did that when she lost her leg. They have something to do and so now she makes them and we try to make some frames for them because they're very expensive, the frames are to buy and she's been helping the community by selling those.

And so that's pretty well my life. Interesting, exciting, never a dull moment and when you were with Rachel, my twin sister, there was never a dull moment because if she thought of something and I thought the idea was okay, my mother said, off we'd go and carry it through. So whenever we became very quiet, my mother came running, but she knew something was up. Yeah (laughs) and only one time this is what I found interesting that my brother's got us mixed up. One time, and he was so ticked. I heard him go out and tell mom, I thought I'd never get a mixed up, but I did. And at home, this is the part I really like, we were never called twin, we were never introduced to people as twin daughters the only time my mother ever introduced the two of us as her twin daughters is the day she died and she introduced us to the doctor that way. It was the only time. We were an individual and when I went to grade school none of the kid where we had four sets in one room, but none of us were ever called twins. Went to high school, "unh-unh."

Come to the convent "mm-hmm" and the reason I think it is, is because I found out it was very unusual for twins to have the same calling. But there are a set of German Notre Dame's in Kentucky they are twins and we did have a set here, Germain and Romaine, but they didn't look alike at all. So we were evidently the first identical because when we were

postulants, they went to the postulate mistress and said to her, They're changing places in chapel. And Sister Stella, the novice mistress said, How do you know? Well one's got a longer veil than the other. So she told the two of us that we shouldn't be changing places, so we says, Well how did they know we were doing it? So she told us how they knew. So we thought, well if they want to play this game, for our survival, periodically we'd change veils. So we thought, you play the game, we'll play the game. And really at one time I was so tired of hearing which one are you when were in the chapel. I went out and had each one of us made of bright yellow shirt with black letters. I'm Evelyn. I'm Rachel. So nobody had to ask. But guess what they asked, Are you sure you got the right shirt on? You sure you didn't change? Now we went to recently to a reunion, family reunion, we wore those shirts. They asked the same questions. So evidently, they know what we were up to.

MEL: Sister, I want to understand when you were novices and you were in church, in chapel. Who thought you were changing places?

SEL: The senior citizen Sisters, the ones that were perpetually professed and they were the ones that were retired at that time and at home.

MEL: And then why did you change places?

SEL: Because they were asking all the time, who who's, and watching how we folded our hands and how we smiled and even if we're stopped to ask, let me see your teeth you know see if they're different and so we thought, Okay if you're gonna start identifying who's who, we're going to start playing a game and pull tricks and not tell you which one's who who and do change on you because we were grade school or high school we change seats and they never caught us and if my sister didn't know an answer she'd give me a wink and I would answer. And I remember my mother when I was in grade school went to one of the Sisters and she said, I think you got the report cards mixed up because my mom knew and she said well I'll be really honest with you, Mrs. Lindenmaier, I really don't know them apart, so I just gave them a grade.

So that's how she would do it and they did the Sisters—we were, when we were in grade school we looked much, much more alike than we do now. Really identical. We even have a picture when we were in grade school about fourth grade that I personally cannot tell the difference, which is unusual. And we were both born at home and very tiny and so we were baptized immediately. Rachel was four pounds and I was four and a half and my dad was wonderful. He had a midwife that he had to stay on for about a month to help my mother since she had two smaller ones because the oldest one was four, then the next one was two and so she helped and we were in a little basket and we stayed in that little basket until we chewed on each other's toes and they only had one baby bed. So my dad made the other baby bed. So one was on my dad's side, one was on my mother's side and I ended up being on mom's side and my sister was on dad's side so I kind of grew closer to mom like she did to dad and when we'd cried during the night they would sit up and they'd say, That's yours and the other one go back to sleep because then that meant that person took care of that crying baby. That's how they did that. And then when we—my bed had those pull up and down sides, so I could get out and bounce onto mom's bed but Rachel couldn't get out so I would crawl across and help Rachel get out, so she could get out.

And so, it was a lot of fun and my mother was just, she taught us everything. We didn't have to go to kindergarten, she taught us how to count money because all of us children started making money at the age of nine because we helped with the schoolbooks and our school supplies not that—my mother—and my mom and dad would never let us pay the tuition. She said, That's our obligation. But they felt by buying—help with the clothes, of course we wore then, wore—eventually went into uniforms and if we'd help with the books because at that time you bought books, so if you took care of them, then you could sell them for more and so by us paying for them made us be more careful and my mom would take us to the store. Taught us then how to read labels. What was good, what wasn't good and how to go by the ounces, which is more, at price-wise. So I learned all that before I ever went to school. We had a newspaper route. We ran that for four years. And she taught us. We marked a book and when they had even the tear-off tickets. The amount of money we collected had to balance with what was in that book. So she taught us already then how to balance a book.

And then at, later on our garage and chicken house burnt down. My dad had to build a new garage while we were there. Mom said, She lost us because out there we helped dad build a new garage. And then he built a little small chicken house because we had 100 chickens every year. We'd raise our own stuff, our own garden, we did a lot of cold packing. Things that kids today would be wonderful if they knew how because we're at the age right now the way things are going, you better start planning a garden and I that's why I love that flower garden and I got tomato plants out there and they finally got little red, not red, but little green tomatoes on them, which I never thought was going to happen and I raised him for the Sisters, the older Sisters, who don't like refrigerated tomatoes. So because when we were living in the apartment, we had a big garden back there my sister and I and we'd bring these tomatoes over and we'd take them to like the Francis Joan and Ruth Grivy and people that we knew who loved tomatoes that were not refrigerated because when you refrigerate a tomato, no good. And my dad learned that he took a big washtub, we had a cellar, and we filled it with white sand. It was different than brown sand. And in that you would take your carrots, your potatoes, anything that was a root plant and you'd put it in that sand, down in that cellar, and would keep for the winter. So when mom needed things, you'd go down, she'd tell you what she wanted, you'd root through the sand and pull them out, how many she wanted, and bring them up and she'd fix them for supper.

So because we came up at the end of World War II things were rationed and my mom—to the day she died—always buried her garbage. so mom says, What's new about a compost pile? What's new about recycling? We called it salvaging and those people that came up during that time you will notice are the most thrifty saving people and you wonder why are they saving this and why are they saving—because they didn't have it, they had to save it and you didn't get a new pair of shoes every year because you were rationed on all that and my mother would take some of her rationing stamps and give them to larger families with the sugar because they needed it more than we did because we didn't use a whole lot of sugar because none of us were big sweeters. You had it, why, maybe on Sunday so she'd give it to the big families cause they used it for braking bread and stuff like that, so my mom would always help. So I learned how to love old people how to do thing, everything came from my family. I would always tell people I would do my childhood over exactly the way it was, I wouldn't change a thing.

And a lot of people say that's odd but I never ever saw my mother and dad fight or argue and it might be because they both had a tragedy in their life after about two months, my

father's first wife died suddenly and my mother's fiancé was killed by train. So both of my parents were older when they met, you know, and actually dad was so down harden. He had a couple guys went with him and they went to Indianapolis and that's where my father and them started an ice cream company and my mother then went to Indianapolis. Her mother went with her and her brother and her sister, they all lived together and they were at a card party and that's where my dad was and they were playing cards most of us always euchre and at the end of the card party, he said to the other guy, You take the little fat one home I'm taking this one home. He knew then that's the one he wanted and I says, "Mom how did he propose?" She says, "Well he really didn't. It was kind of we were out, now we'll need this, now we'll need that." And my mother never wanted a big wedding. No big book, hullabaloo, or nothing like that. So she got married at 6 o'clock in the morning in the church and then took off for Louisville a little time dad had left and it was on a Thanksgiving Day.

So, and they lived to be good old ages. That's their pictures right up there on the wall. Now that might that's when my dad was a little younger. My dad was 82 and that picture of my mother way over. Here on the side, I don't know if you can see it. In that picture she's 95 and a lot of people take her for it about 65, 70. Yeah. And she died, well, at a mistake of a nurse. Too much morphine. Dad died because he loved his fat. So, he, his heart just went plom at the age of 82, but you know when I don't know I never could explain it, but when my father died, even my mother, the greatest peace came over me. I can't explain that peace, but it was like, I knew I loved them and they knew I loved them and I never did anything that I felt I regretted because my mom and dad was a type of person I don't care what it was, you could come and talk to them, and it was wonderful and today's kids don't have that.

MEL: The first year you were in the convent, your parents could visit?

SEL: They had certain times they could visit. They could come at Christmas, Easter, yeah. And then when we were separated by mission, it became more difficult because—and my dad also had a—well, they stayed related, kind of close to dad it was because he married the sister and then mom has sister in community, so when they would come to try to visit, I was like in Evansville, Indiana and Rachel was like in Cincinnati. So the only way they knew how to do that was they'd come to one on Christmas and one on New Year's and I Easter they would try to do it maybe on one Sunday because it was hard to get us together. Now when we were in the novitiate, until you made perpetual vows, you came home at Christmastime because you took and continued on with your education and learning of community life. Well then they came and we could visit right here and then when we retired they did it, but between then, no.

MEL: When you were a novitiate you left home, was that difficult?

SEL: When we left home yes, but I think it was easier for the two of us because we had each other, so the hardest to be very truthful was for my father. And my mother—my mom and dad prayed a Hail Mary every day together that if any of their children had a vocation they would follow the vocation. That my mom said, she said to God, I didn't think you would take two and that's how that all came about, but dad, he smoked a pipe and he would deliberately run out of tobacco and says who's going to take me to the drugstore and we would go. Take him to the drugstore and he'd sit in the middle, one on each side and we always get ice cream then and always brought mom a candy bar home. And I'll never forget

when he, when they left us and they got in a car to leave, dad said, Who's gonna take me to get my tobacco? And he never smoked after that. Never smoked. And it was difficult, but you knew they were proud too.

But it was very difficult and I remember we had a friend in the family, they were Masons and they came and I don't know what they expected, they just thought I guess you become a totally different person, I don't know, because all of them went back home and says, "Oh they're still the same." I said, "I didn't plan to be any different." But some do change and we didn't we just stayed who we were and yeah that was the hardest thing on my dad the hardest for me was my sister went out and I, we went separate ways, but you know before we made final vows that's one thing we talked over, whether or not we thought we could live apart. If we didn't think we could live apart, then that's not our calling, but we and it was difficult, but we managed and we did it for good over 30 years apart.

MEL: Sister, could you explain for someone who might not understand what a mission is and how you received your mission?

SEL: Oh, a mission is an assignment telling you where they sent you to go and you got your assignments after a retreat. There were two retreats in a summer. What we call an early retreat and later in a summer retreat and at the end of that retreat the council and the Mother would come with little white envelopes and in that envelope told you where you were going, what the name of the place was, and who your superior was. So it was that, you didn't know if you were going back or if you were going to a new place because at the end of every year you were told pack your trunk, so in case you're not coming back all they had to do was ship it to the new place and that's what we called mission because we considered mission work wherever we went and I spent most of my assignments were among the poor and then I was quite a long time at an inner city in Cincinnati and those were the—I love those people so much. I loved the poor. I'll never forget the day this woman came to a door and she had branches of a tree, but no top. She had the top of the tree, but no pole and she said, "I bet the two of you could fix this for me." Because at that time we were both the St. Joe's in the inner city working with the black and some sisters didn't want to work among the blacks, so we were assigned together for a while there and we said, "Yeah, we'll fix it for you." And we went to a lumber place and got what's a, closet rung, wooden closet rung and took our drill and put the holes in on an angle for the branches to go in and then at the very top, we put a hole with the very top and it turned out to be about maybe between 4 and 5 foot, by the time we got finished because some of the branches weren't there.

We took it to the home and we put the tree up for her, she was so thrilled, and we came in with lights and ornaments. We decorated that tree and turned that light on and this child was about three going on four years old never had a tree in her home before and the joy of seeing that kid jump up and down because she had a Christmas tree really it meant so much to me and that's the same way when we used to have what we call—you could bring one of your Christmas gifts, so you could talk about it get it out of your system and one mother came and said, Sister, all the children got was some nuts and apple and orange because we didn't have the money. So all of us that were assigned there at St. Joseph's got together and said, Let's get some games and toys that we knew that these kids would like and we skipped out of school for a while and went to her home to give them to the mother on Three Kings' Day, the Epiphany and tell them when the kids came home that the three



kings arrived. And when they came back to school the next day, here they brought their one toy.

It was so neat and when you do things like that and you, just do those, just little things like bringing in a mattress or a bed for a family of ten and all the kids are sleeping on one mattress on the floor. So my happiest missions were with the poor because you really felt like you were doing something and you did do a lot of good for a lot of those kids and someone became very successful.

MEL: The mothers knew to come to you and Sister Rachel, were you at a convent?

SEL: We taught at Saint Joseph's School. They came to the convent house of the school and they knew—it didn't take long for word to go around that we could do things. We can make things and so that's what we would do and Sister Mary Robert was our cook and so Kroger's would give us a lot of food and a lot of bread and she knew who the families were to call and they'd pick them up and I remember the one time and I don't really remember exactly where what company gave it to us, but we had a liver of a cow, which I didn't know was so doggone big and we would cut that liver up and package it and call the families, so they would have you know some meat to eat. I just loved working with them and if I had the health I could get still do it. I just have too bad of a back to do anything and my feet, so that's why I use a go-kart because I can't go a long distance anymore. I make things that's all it needs to be. And torment the Sisters. (laughs)

MEL: So when you received your first mission, Sister Rachel, was already on her mission?

SEL: Sister Rachel, she went up a couple of times. She was working in a kitchen and she dropped part of a food grinder in a garbage can and it really made the racket, so Sister Stella called her out. She said, oh boy, here I am. I'm going home. And the Sister's mother had passed away and she was to go to Aurora, Indiana and take that class until she came back for about three days. I didn't know she was going all of a sudden she didn't show up at night prayer and I kept asking Sister Stella, Where's Rachel, where's Rachel? She didn't answer me and we got on—we didn't talk on one side of the road. Once you—the novitiate where the sisters' formation was, was on—as you go down that road that you in, through campus was on one side and the motherhouse was on the other side. Well you didn't talk as you were going over then that part that's where you're supposed to keep silence and so when we got across the street you could start talking and that's when I kept saying, Where is she, where is she? And she didn't answer and then when we got on the porch of the novitiate building she stopped and then she told everybody where Rachel was. I thought the world had come to an end. I thought, "Oh my God." So I was I would wait and I would wait for her to come home. And I sat in the back part of the study hall and they read spiritual books, we called a story hour (laughs). We were supposed to be getting it, but I didn't and I heard the door open of the building and I saw my sister. I didn't care what was going on in that room, I just ran out and that was the end of it and just grabbed her. And that was only three days and then the next time she went out, she went to take a Sister's place who was ill and that was for about a month and then she came back and that Sister died so they sent her permanently and they were telling me it was for a short time and I kept saying to Sister Stella, I says, Why don't you just tell me is she coming home at the end of the school year? Cause I said, You keep telling me a month and the months are going by and she says, yeah, it's the end of the year.

So, that helped me. That's when I learned to crochet. I had to do something to keep my mind off of her being gone and we were not allowed to write each other but at certain times and we never wrote letters before Easter, it was after Easter you wrote your family. And I, she sent me a letter on mission they could do that and she said I got an Easter letter but she didn't get one from me, which was the hardest thing she said she ever endured. Waiting for that letter, which she eventually got, but it was after Easter, you know that anticipation. And so the separation was not an easy thing and I remember asking this set of twins, Sister Germain and Romaine. They were older Sisters and I said, "Did you find that easier being apart as you got older because you're apart so long?" She said, "Oh no, harder." And she was right. So I'm, and they lived together, they got assigned together and they were together six months when one of them died. They only had six months and my, I'm blessed. I've been able to be with my sister much longer.

MEL: Sister, I would like to understand, so you were in your last years of study when your sister was away for those three days?

SEL: Made temporary yeah—

MEL: So you were still in classes?

SEL: I was still in classes until, in the middle of the year they needed somebody in New Albany, Indiana. So she actually started Our Lady of Perpetual, Cincinnati. I went to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany and so I, I went from about February to the end of the school year and then you'd always come back because we were the first class that Mother Cephas was able to keep home to keep studying and then—so we went out to a permanent assignment when we were first profession and my first assignment then was to Holy Name, Beech Grove, Indiana with just three miles away from home and when grandma was dying I couldn't even go to be with my mother because she just didn't do it then. And when she died then the Reverend Mother said your grandmother lived with you a long time. So you may go to her funeral. So we got to go to the funeral and Rachel was sent to Connersville, Indiana. When I was assigned to Cincinnati, they took her out of Cincinnati and put her in Lawrenceburg, Indiana (laughs).

And then I got this letter from Mother Marie saying we can't find anyone willing to work at St. Joe's with the Black because they didn't force you when it came to something like that and we're asking your sister to return as she had already been there and we would like you to go and I called my sister and I told her about the letter and I said, "What should I do?" because I didn't want to go because she was there. She said, "I'm not telling you what to do, you make your own decision." There I was, back to square one. So I wrote back and says, "Whatever you want me to do." So I threw it back in their lap (laughs) and that's when they assigned me to St. Joe's and I spent four years then with her working there, she had been there a total of ten and then apart of we went again.

I stayed in Cincinnati. She went to, in Indiana up by Terre Haute, Clinton. She went to Clinton and so then we kept staying separated till finally she came. I was at Saint Francis in Over-The-Rhine when she went to Saint Al's in Bridgetown and then my knees were bad then and I went down some flights of steps and the doctor said, "You really ought to be where they're not so many steps, so that's when I called the Sister who I knew to see if I

could come back to work at Saint Al's and that's how we ended up then being together. She taught third grade and I taught fifth grade in the same school. It was nice.

MEL: And you lived together then in the convent?

SEL: We lived in the motherhouse until they wanted the convent and so then we would just went off into an apartment and then we got a phone call from a principal at Saint Boniface on Northside which is an inner-city place because Bridgetown was not. Wanting the two of us to come work in her school, she needed teachers and she was trying to get as many Sisters as she could, so we took that offer and we have a—while we were there she thought it was neat. She told us one day, Really dress up. She didn't tell us why. I thought, I thought I was coming to school looking pretty good and here she had a photographer come and interviewed us like what you're doing here because it was unusual for twins to be teaching in the same school and we got a picture with an article in there and the picture I've got it down in the basement hanging the wall, but I also have it upstairs among other things I made copies of. It's a nice article, it was in *The Cincinnati Post*. Big thing. And they took a picture as we were looking at each other and it turned out to be really—that's one time I could say I took a pretty good picture and the only thing about the article is that my sister and I did not like: They left out my mom—my dad, so we write it in and we put it up because it gives a life of our beginning, where we went to grade school, where we went to high school, and a little bit about—you know, and the one thing that I remember saying and it's in a little you know how they do these little square boxes they—I said, "I do not like being compared." And as a teacher I never compared with anyone. It's wrong.

MEL: Sister, pardon me for going back, but I'm still picturing that letter, when you received an Easter letter from your sister, but she didn't receive an Easter letter from you. Would you just explain that again because I think that for some people understanding why you couldn't write a letter before Easter? And this was while you were still here studying?

SEL: This is when you were still in formation, you were six years in formation, and that was the regulations that they had and it was part I guess of testing you to see how you would make it. The professed Sisters did not have that regulation and so you only had certain times you could write letters home and only certain times that you could write letters to others, which would be like my sister and so I was not allowed to write during Lent because if you get it by Easter you were writing it during Lent. We didn't do that, you had to wait till after Lent and the same—now Christmas they didn't do that, you—and we always made the cards we sent home. They didn't give us bought cards, you made your card, Christmas cards for your family and, and you didn't write everybody. It was just mainly your mom and dad that you would send cards to and so that's was the difference. That's why she could write because the Superior gave her the okay, but we—as long as we were in the formation here, you didn't do it.

And most of our letters that we ever wrote start it the same way. Same opening. Not in seeing each other and if she was having a difficulty, let's say with a parent, I knew it because I was having the same thing. If she was sick, I knew it. There's a lot—in fact, I told them one time, I had a sister. I says, You need to learn and understand who twins are and

what they're like because you know there's—and I used to pray for another set to come so they'd forget us and go on to somebody else, but I says, There is a difference. There's a bond that you cannot explain and if—my pain is her pain. It hurts me to see her struggle to trying to get over the stroke, but we're both accepting it. And I did not plan to retire living in this room, but and her not being in the same area. I didn't expect to see her in what I call the healthcare so soon and neither did she and her famous saying is, which I'm going to put across here if she dies before me, "You didn't talk this over with me first." Everything is, "God didn't talk this over with me first, that's not right. He should've at least given me a warning." (laughs) And so, that's her famous saying.

So it changed, it completely changed the way I had planned to retire and the way she did because she's not always able to do. Now the other day she came down because she was so worried about this frame she's making. And she looked pale and she said, "I don't know what's wrong," she says, "My sugars' okay, but I don't feel right." And she didn't. I said, "Why don't you just go on upstairs. It'll get finished and you know—" Well she knew that anything that we started, I'd help her with. She always knew that. She'd come home one day and she says, "I hope you're not mad at me, but I used part of your budget to buy a guitar." I said, "You don't even play a guitar." She says, "But I thought maybe I could learn." Well she found out her fingers got too sore on the end, so she sold it for more than she bought it. The next thing I know she came home with an accordion. I says, "Rachel and she, she could play because she could play piano, but she couldn't play her keyboard and push the squeeze at the same time, so she said, "I can't do that." So she sold that again for more than she bought it and I says, "Why don't you just plain say, 'It's not for me?'" (laughs) So she did. But you never knew what she was going to do. You get in a car, you didn't know where you were gonna end up with. "Hitch along" as I called it to go someplace, she went.

Yeah, she's my very, very best friend. It's a closeness I don't think anybody will ever know. I had meningitis back in 2013 and I was so close and I knew that—it just felt like I knew I wasn't gonna make it and I remember when I went to the bathroom and I looked in the mirror and I looked at myself and I thought, Oh my God I knew I'd lost weight. I says, Lord, I know you're calling me home and if that's what you want, okay, and I know Rachel will make it without me and she came home one day and she knew I loved BLT's and she says, "Would you like a BLT?" I said, "You know, it sounds good, but it was—when you get meningitis, it's hard to eat. You can't, you don't have the appetite and I started eating that BLT and from then on (unintelligible) it was uphill. So I give her as a credit. If it wasn't for her, I don't think I'd of made it. I really don't. I was a good—uh, hmm from May to August, not able to do anything. But I pushed and I—because I wanted to. I wanted to get to chapel so bad so thought, uh maybe from May and into June, I was start, able to start to make it into chapel, but then I'd not do anything and because it's not the same as watching it on television, it's just not. That's no different than watching a television show. You gotta be there, be part of it. And I'm so grateful that we could go to daily Mass because when you were working you couldn't. You probably know that yourself. You just, they don't—the

Masses don't hit your schedules and the bosses don't understand that. So that's the story of my life. It's been a happy one. It's been a roller coaster. Up and downs.

MEL: May I ask you Sister how has your prayer life changed over the course of your life?

SEL: When I was a novice, I remember I really could pray. I felt so close to God and then it didn't all continue that way because as a novice especially your canonical year is which you really was your prayer life here, you didn't have that much other than to take time to pray and read and stuff and then as you went on mission it wasn't quite the same way. Although we always prayed together, we always went to Mass together, and you had your study time and you had your recreation time and then you had your time you could do that, but that was— sometimes you were too tired, really. So as I went along, it was a struggle, but I had—thank God I had spiritual directors who would help me on the way, but as I got older and I moved in when I was asked to help with the motherhouse, my whole prayer life changed because I could get to daily Eucharist. That's my strength and I find myself. I didn't have to worry about a schedule, no time limit. So that I could set a definite time every morning for an hour, hour and a half. That's my time with God and I still do that. That is my time every morning and I do it in the morning because I'm afraid I'll put it off or I'll do something and I will be too tired.

Although at this morning after going to a birthday party, I would, I sit in my office, I had no problem. Went to the other part, I could not for love or money stay awake. So I just said to the Lord, "Take the sleep and I'll see you later tonight before I go to bed." But no, the prayer life grows and it grows as you get older, you see, although I don't consider myself old, but you see some things so different. You think different, you know, it's just like, well you know you're going more toward the end than you are the beginning and, but you don't dwell on that. It's just like, "Use the time that you have now to do what you wish you could have done when you're much younger." Although we at home, we prayed as a family and that's, that's very true as a family that prays together stays together. I'm a firm believer of that. We had the rosary every night, some things tacked on that I thought we'd never end, but and my mom and dad and my one brother didn't want to do that and my mom and dad says, "You don't have to if you go, if you want to go outside, go outside or if you want to go someplace else just don't disturb us of those who want to pray. And he'd crawl back in and we prayed a family rosary as long as I can remember, so we always prayed. So I learned prayers and from their example.

I can remember one time, first time we got television. Little 7 inch screen, rented it. Cowboy show and they were going to church I forget what it was for, there was something might have been Lent. And my dad said, "Are you going?" "No, I don't think I'll go tonight." All dad says is, "That's okay if that's all you love Jesus." I'll never forget that word because it was a sacrifice and I look back on it now, he was right, because we were never forced to go to Sunday Mass. We got ready if you wanted to go and you know none of us put up a fuss about going because we saw them and my sister remembered today that my dad, she had

to get up and go to the bathroom and she said she tiptoed. So she wouldn't bother anybody and there she saw dad kneeling by the side of his chair saying the Rosary before he went to work. He did that every day and then came home and said a Rosary with the rest of us.

So our, my prayer life started there. I don't remember learning prayers in school. I knew them. We just did it. I mean we had block rosaries and none of us kids squawked about going to them. Are you familiar with—a block rosary is when the people in the whole block get together and pray the Rosary together. And that was about once a week that we would—and was for peace, world peace. And it really worked. Prayer works, prayer is powerful. And you do, I do things now that and when it turns out or I'm having a hard—it doesn't seem to be working and all of a sudden, it's just automatic, thank you Jesus, you're so good and as you get older yourself, you're going to see the difference because it just comes or something that comes with age. You don't get as flustered, you don't even, don't even get that embarrassed anymore. You've been through it all (laughs).

But that's how my prayer life really started, so I had a prayer life before I actually came and I did pray for a vocation. I really thought I was going to get married at the beginning, but it kept, it kept changing. I thought, if God wants me to have a man, he'll put a man in front of me. Then I said, No I don't think I want to. So it's a back and forth thing. That's why I said, Go for it, if you don't you won't know. When, when you get married, it's an 'I do' and it's done. We got six years, although I consider the dating process is part, like the formation, like we got. But it's not the same as living with them and really knowing them. It's different when you live with them. It changes, I'm sure, I guess I don't know I didn't never get married. I had a brother they got married and it sure did change, you know, so—yeah.

MEL: Sister, may I just ask you, who asked you to go and study computer repair? You said that you were offered—

SEL: A.B. Dick

MEL: So you were in, were you finished with formation?

SEL: No, I was a young Sister. I think I was stationed at St. Joe's at that time and they saw I was mechanical. We took a test at one time. The Sis—all the Sisters did to see what your real, I guess you could say talent, interest was in and both of us was maintenance. That was number one and Rachel's number two, I think was cooking, and mine was nursing and I did want to be a nurse, but I knew I couldn't handle the studies. And then my third was cooking and I don't remember her third. And then there was another time when we had a was, I forget what type of test they called it, was to let us know who we are like the Myers-Briggs you've heard of that and it came back on Rachel's, "She cannot distinguish work from play." I thought, you didn't need to take the test to figure that one out (laughs). But yeah, that's—so, and I don't know, I guess just in talking to the fella and taking an interest in asking questions how this works, how that works is how they figured it out because when I

took over the communication office, the guy, Dave Guswater takes care of our copier machines and he said, "When you call I know it's a repair" because he said, "You can fix most of it" and I did, I just loved it and when he came to do anything, I watched every move he made, I watched it all. I could probably take the thing apart and put it back together. But I was just, that's why my mother said she had four boys. We were just did, we were just interested in it.

My sister and I put a muffler and a tailpipe on our own car before we entered. We had her own car and we could put in spark plugs we could do any of that repair because that was just our interest. I'll never forget the day one Sister was starting off to work. She was a principal at a school and all of a sudden not long after she took off work, she came back going clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk. Her tailpipe was dragging and she got so nervous of what to do. I said, Well take our car. We'll get this into the repair shop. I don't know whether we had a day off and she didn't or what it was. So we went out the two of us with wire and wire cutters and pliers and crawled under the car and we're putting that tailpipe up long enough to take it to the repair shop without having to call a tow truck and out the window this gentleman who lived next to us in the apartment, who was an atheist, by the way. "Do you girls belong to AAA?" "Yeah, we belong to AAA." "Well then use it." And I'll never forget this guy. We had a storm and it hit the tree and he couldn't wait till we got home the next day. He said, "I almost believed in your God." I said, "Sal you'll be converted before it's all over." And I think he did I really do think he did because I don't think there is a real true atheist because otherwise and he took the interest to show us how the filter in our furnace works, how to take it in and out, which we already knew, but we listened.

And so you knew something was there or he wouldn't have taken the time and what didn't take long, when we first moved into one apartment that a lady came and said, "I understand you our religious Sisters." We said, "Yes, we are." And she says, "I'm recuperating from a cancer surgery and I cannot get the parish to bring me communion. Could you bring me communion every day?" Which we did. So we said, that's the way—my sister said, the way we should be living because he said, "Be out among my people." And we fit the bill with Pope Francis because basically that's what we were to be about among the people and our community has been a community has always worked for the poor, which I liked and I joined it because I mean I first thought of the Sisters of Providence, who I had in high school, but there's two things you had to have talent, be intelligent; money. I missed out on both so that eliminated that one. And then I thought of going to the Sisters of St. Joseph, Tipton and my brother says, Well they're not affiliated with Rome, you should stick to a community that is and I thought about that and I thought you're right. I did have the Sisters of St. Joseph in grade school, but they were from St. Louis.

So I thought about it and I remember coming to Oldenburg every year to see my Aunt, Sister Leona and Sister Mary George is the one for my dad and I always say to myself, someday I'm gonna live here, someday I'm gonna live here. And I thought, Oh it must be nice because I don't think, I didn't think the sisters did anything, you know, I didn't know. I learned. And finally I did, I picked the Franciscans for the fact that I felt every time I visited there seemed to be such a joy and a family spirit and that's what I looked for and so that's

what really pulled me into the Franciscans, which was wonderful because when you entered and came in you never had one Sister say, I remember you did this in school and you did that. They didn't know me because I'd have had a pretty long list because I had fun (laughs). But that's how I came here and I have never ever been sorry. Never.

MEL: Thank you, Sister.

SEL: You're welcome.

## **Part 2**

MEL: Sister Evelyn part two.

SEL: This is the part two is something that may be an interest to anyone who is a twin. But I remember my sister and I: I talked it over we thought about it and I said to her, "You know I think God sent us to the same calling because for some reason together we have touched many, many people that we may never have touched." Because people will come to see us they won't—they said, "I don't know their names, but they're twins." And people that I thought she knew, she didn't, I didn't, but somewhere we, we touched them. Even just sitting on that front porch. The fellow says, "Don't you move." Because you always look to stop by to visit. So you could touch a lot of people together and that's what we did. It's—and that's a gift too.

## **Part 3**

MEL: Part three with Sister Evelyn.

SEL: This is a little tip that I think is kind of humorous. My sister and I were both assigned to St. Joseph's School in Cincinnati, Ohio and both of us were teaching first grade and this is when we were in the long habits and so we told our students when the bell rings at recess just to come in line where they see us so they know the word their spot would be. And it didn't kind of work out that way.

All of a sudden they didn't know where they were going and it became a little confusing and I said to—my sister said, "Will you take yours on upstairs" and I said, "I don't know them yet, this is just the first day." So we finally just said to the children would you slowly go up to the classroom and everything will get in order. And when we got out there I asked them, "What happened? I was standing there." But they said, "Sister, we didn't know which one was our teacher you look alike." And I apologized said I'm sorry. I said, "I never gave that a thought. I only think of myself as an individual." So I said, "Well the next day you won't have any trouble, we'll each wear a different color ribbon." And we did. We wore Dayglo pink and a Dayglo green and from then on they had no trouble knowing who their teacher was.

MEL: Thank you, Sister.